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RECOLLECTIONS

OF

WEST VIRGINIA CAMPAIGN,

WITH

"THE THREE MONTHS TROOPS."

MAY, JUNE, AND JULY, 1861.

BY AN ENGINEER OFFICER.

PRIVATE COPY.
FROM THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE, "OLD AND NEW," FOR JUNE, 1873.

BOSTON:
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THE WEST VIRGINIA CAMPAIGN OF 1861.

BY AN OFFICER OF U. S. ENGINEERS.

I RECEIVED orders, May 1, 1861, to join Major-Gen. G. B. McClellan, Ohio Volunteers, and joined that officer at Cincinnati upon the 14th of May; and the same day I was ordered, and passed on, to Cairo, Ill., as confidential officer and engineer, to fortify that position, and Bird Point opposite, on the right bank of the Mississippi. And during the next ten days that I remained there, I traced out, and had commenced, two lines of defence. The inner one, for the protection of stores and a garrison of some three thousand men, was well under way, as also a battery at the South Point. I also laid out a work at Bird Point, about a hundred yards square, with bastions at the two diagonal corners, — south-west and north-east; the other two angles having been made slightly acute for a better flanking fire.

From constant and reliable reports of refugees, and with the knowledge I had of the thirty-five thousand to forty thousand troops of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, then embodied under Gen. McClellan's orders, and for whom I found there were steamers enough on the rivers near, I was fully satisfied that the Mississippi could be swept to New Orleans, and held firmly; and, Gen. J. H. Prentiss (Ill. Vols.) in command there coinciding, I then earnestly urged this course upon Gen. McClellan.

The general at first sent Dr. Stukely (U.S.A.), and again Capt. John Rogers (U.S.N.), to learn more definitely of these probabilities; and, immediately after Rogers' return, I was (on May 23) telegraphed to go back to Cincinnati, as Major Marcy (chief of staff) informed me on my arrival, for the purpose of aiding in carrying out that project for the seizure of the Mississippi River.

But, the day after my orders were sent me, the telegraphic news reached Gen. McClellan, of the irruption of the rebel general, R. S. Garnett, into West Virginia, — a part of his district, — with a force of several thousand men. Gen. McClellan immediately visited Indianapolis to review the Indiana troops there, commanded by the Indiana brigadier-general, T. A. Morris, whom he at once ordered to Grafton, Va., with several Indiana regiments (the Sixth, Seventh, and Ninth), and the Ohio Fourteenth, under Col. James Steedman; which place Gen. Morris reached (by the way of Wheeling) by the 1st of June.

While at Cincinnati, awaiting (as his chief engineer) Gen. McClellan's return, I received his orders, stated to be on the application of Gen. Morris, to join that general at Wheeling; which I did about May 30; and, within some two days after, I was requested by Gen. Morris to act confidentially for him, and according to my best judgment, in organizing and preparing the troops then reaching him for service in West Virginia.

Gen. T. A. Morris was a distinguished graduate of West Point, of the year 1834; but, for many years, he had been a resident of Indianapolis, where his noble character had endeared him to the people of Indiana: so that his influence was invaluable to the government in bringing out the first troops for the war. And, of all

the first ten generals that I was brought in contact with in this war, there was no one surpassed, if any one equalled, him in his most unselfish devotion to the public service. His chief aide (or chief of staff) was Major John Love, a West-Point graduate, and a careful, faithful friend of Gen. Morris; his junior aide a Lieut. Hines; his assistant adjutant-general was Capt. I. A. Stein, a talented and accomplished officer of the volunteers; and his quartermaster, Capt. D. L. Smith, one of the most useful and faithful men for his grade and duties that I have ever known. These officers were the main assistants of Gen. Morris, as his staff, through the whole campaign.

Upon reaching Grafton, a railroad position some thirty to forty miles south-west of Wheeling, Col. Kelly, with the First West Virginia Infantry, was found in command; and it was learned that Col. G. A. Porterfield of the rebel Virginians, with his regiment and some other troops, was at Philippi, twelve miles south. And two expeditions were at once sent out, that very night, by Gen. Morris, to cut him off, — one to our left, or east of the Tyger River, under Col. Kelly; the other under Col. Dumont, Seventh Indiana, with parts of the Sixth and Ninth Indiana (and with Lander assistant aide-de-camp, afterwards general), went from our right to cut off escape to the south-west. These troops marched all night in violent rains, and met very nearly at daylight, at either end of the bridge, at the west of the village of Philippi; though had Kelly's guide been faithful, or done his duty, and brought his troops in at the east of the village, the whole force must have been captured without resistance. The *old* road actually entered the town on the east over the hill north.

As it was, with a slight collision, in which Kelly only was wounded (by a rebel commissary clerk), the whole force of Porterfield was routed towards Beverly, thirty miles south-east (he himself escaping with only the clothes he stood in), leaving all the "public property," several boxes of "squirrel rifles," their ammunition, six flags and colors (four of which I secured for McClellan), Porterfield's trunk, commission, epaulets, &c.; and all their bags and baggage, all their private property, every thing were left behind them.

I had made a request to accompany Kelly's expedition at its starting from Grafton; but Gen. Morris replied, "I have more important duties for you here." But when, at noon the next day, Lander came down, apparently completely exhausted, reporting a hard fight, and Col. Kelly mortally wounded, and that our new troops were greatly disorganized, and in fear of a return attack from Porterfield, Gen. Morris turned to me, saying, "You must go up and take command." And (by an engine kept ready for the part of the route four miles west to Webster) I left in ten minutes, — as soon as Gen. Morris's orders to take command could be written; and, taking horse for the twelve miles from Webster, I reached Philippi, at four to five, P.M., and finding Col. Kelly lying, as was supposed, mortally wounded, I took Col. Dumont and the other commandants of regiments, with me (no one of them hesitating, or objecting to my command by Gen. Morris's orders), and, examining the three outlet roads from the village, I placed one of these regiments at each of these roads, without posts and pickets in advance against the feared surprise, retaining Dumont (as senior) for a reserve at the court-house,

whither he had found, or caused to be brought, the most of the captured property.

A report was at once sent to Gen. Morris in the morning, that we had had no attack during the night; and about that time, the anticipated danger being over, Col. Dumont began to fret, and to ask who was in command, or whether he was not the senior. But when, by the return note from Gen. Morris in the afternoon, I was recalled to Grafton, as needed there, and Dumont found he was to be left on his own resources, he urged me greatly to remain in command; and his pressure afterwards was so strong on Gen. Morris for this, that I was sent back for more permanent command there, the second day after, or about the 5th or 6th of June.

I had known the rebel commander (Col. Porterfield) in Mexico, as adjutant of Hamtramck's Virginia regiment, and esteemed him so much, that I had, years afterwards, given him a clerkship in Washington. And as, during this second visit, I found we had captured all his personal baggage, which we neither wished to pillage nor retain, as our men had not, at that time, their appetites whetted for plunder (as was the case afterwards, I am sorry to say, with some at Corrick's Ford), I had the wish to return him this personal property: and proposing it to Gen. Morris, then at Grafton, he telegraphed McClellan, who approved it; and within a day or two I sent out for this purpose a shrewd, confident officer, with a few men and a wagon, to take Col. Porterfield's trunk, &c., to him, to Beverly, where he was supposed to be, — about thirty miles south-east of Philippi. Of course, this officer was not to go with his eyes shut; and he did not do so. For finding no troops on the whole route to stop him, and but a small guard at Beverly, he pushed on eight miles farther, to Huttonsville, to deliver the property. His return, of course, assured us of our security from any large force for some forty miles to our front.

I regret to say that I received in answer a letter from Porterfield, which, though very civil otherwise, was not entirely ingenuous, denying, as it did, that the trunk was his own. On which (the mails not being then entirely stopped) I replied to him that it contained his own commission as colonel, military books with his name in them, and the hat and epaulets of his rank. This commission I had retained; and subsequently, in August, I received a letter from his wife at Martinsburg, Va., on our border-lines, which requested the return of that commission; while she enclosed me the proceedings of a court of inquiry upon her husband for this flight from Philippi. This court was, as it appeared, presided over by Col. Taliaferro of the Twenty-third rebel Virginia Regiment; which regiment we had, in the mean time (in July), routed, with the capture of his flag and baggage, &c., at Corrick's Ford, as will be seen hereafter.

I continued at Philippi as captain — confidential aide — *in command*, (though addressed as colonel by Gen. Morris) for some two to three weeks; there being about four regiments, or some twenty-five hundred to three thousand men there; Col. James Steedman (Fourteenth Ohio), Col. Dumont (Seventh Indiana), being senior colonels: of the others, there were Col. Crittenden (Sixth Indiana), Col. Milroy (Ninth Indiana), and Col. Irvine with a battalion of the Sixteenth Ohio Regiment, and a section of Col. Barnett's (Cleveland, O.) ar-

tillery. In front, south-east, fourteen miles on the hither side of the Laurel Mountains, on the Beverly Road, lay Gen. R. S. Garnett, the chief rebel commander, in a fortified camp, with, as it was finally ascertained, some five thousand to six thousand men at least, held in an iron discipline, with some four hundred to six hundred finely mounted cavalry. And constant scouting and skirmishing was occurring night and day in the dozen miles between our camps; men being killed and taken on either side now and then. We had no mounted men, until Gen. Morris, after much delay, procured fifty Colt's revolvers; when he bought horses, saddles and bridles to match, and we mounted some fifty men of the infantry regiments. But within one week more than half of them were dismounted and useless; the horses or men becoming unfit for the service.

We were several (some eight or ten) days in this position, where some of the colonels — especially Milroy, a good, brave, but rash officer — were constantly urging me to attack Garnett; for which, I understood, I had the authority from Gen. Morris (then at Grafton) whenever I deemed it to be judicious. But, not then being able to obtain the slightest *assured* information of the numbers or strength of Garnett's forces, I constantly and positively refused until I should have some such knowledge. I, however, was satisfied that his force was far superior to our own; and, sending this word to Gen. Morris, he telegraphed to McClellan, at Cincinnati, who sent some additional regiments; and, these beginning to arrive about the 12th and 14th of June, I arranged for a double attack on Garnett at Laurel Hill. I proposed to start at mid-day, about half my force to go in wagons for half the distance (for greater speed, and to save them from fatigue) by a blind forest road, from *our right* at Philippi, to take Garnett in rear from the south side of Laurel Hill; while I myself planned to move twelve hours later with the remaining force, to attack him in front, some twelve to fourteen miles distant; and I actually wrote letters, saying, "Unless bad luck or McClellan comes, by Friday I will have Garnett."

But McClellan did come by that Friday (about the 19th July); and, on explaining the plans to him, he, soon after this, directed a similar movement, though over greater space, and involving greater delay. Instead of a *near* attack, by crossing within the triangle (of fifteen to twenty miles on a side) between Philippi, Buckhannon, and Laurel Hill, to Garnett's Camp, by a march of some twenty hours, as had been intended, he decided to act on the roads of the largest triangle (of twenty-five to thirty miles of a side), which connects the towns of Philippi, Buckhannon, and Beverly; which involved a delay that was eventually prolonged to four weeks, — up to the 12th and 13th July.

In the mean time, McClellan continued my duties with Morris as his own confidential officer, — a position that, in fact, I held with Morris also. And he soon began to send the bulk of the troops to Buckhannon (some thirty-five miles south-west of Grafton) with *all the* mounted men, — three organized squadrons; although, on my earnest representation to him of their great necessity to us, he had promised "*to divide*" with us at Philippi, but did not. And he brought together there at Buckhannon some nine thousand men in front of Pegram's twenty-five hundred, while he left Morris, with little more than three thou-

sand men, at Philippi, to watch Garnett's five thousand or six thousand men intrenched at fourteen miles distance, to guard that he should not come North, towards us, or escape to his right or left, on *our* side of Laurel Hill. And, of this force of ours, he even ordered away the Sixth Ohio Regiment (some eight hundred men); but he allowed them finally to remain, upon strong letters of remonstrance from both Morris and myself, but with a harsh letter to Morris, that he should consider any further application for troops as equivalent to a resignation of his command.

With our pickets and detachments constantly skirmishing day and night, we continued in this position for six or eight days, under orders to watch, and hold Garnett in check; while McClellan, as we understood, was preparing to attack him, as we expected, each day. But at length, one evening, at ten, P.M., we received orders from McClellan to move forward, and take position at Eliot's place, near Beelington (about a mile and a half short of Garnett's camp), by six the next morning. And by this order we were directed to leave the road, and cross and recross the river on our right to avoid a *supposed* defile. I was immediately intrusted with the entire order and arrangement of the troops, times of starting, &c.; and at once told Gen. Morris that we must not cross the river as ordered, as it would give the alarm (if not given before), and expose us to destruction. The troops moved at two, A.M., in a special, written regular order given out; and, marching till just before daylight, we had reached half way, when we rested at the head of the column some twenty minutes to close up. And then we moved rapidly to Eliot's, reaching there by five, A.M., and meeting mounted pickets, or their scouts, first, *only* within a half-mile of Eliot's, when they fired upon us, and fled rapidly to the main body, to give the alarm of "a scouting-party," as we heard they supposed us to be. We had expected to meet them several miles in advance of this position, as we should have done but for this gross and unusual negligence on their part.

I led this movement with the advance company of skirmishers, using my own judgment in every case before I would allow delay to the column for scouting. And, although flanked by platoons of men scattered on the right and left, we marched steadily, even with them and the column close in rear of us, through all open fields of two hundred or three hundred yards width in all cases, — except only *in woods, on a hillside above us,* and the few short distances where woods occurred on both sides; and the column was really not delayed one half-hour on such accounts. And I have never doubted, that, had we been permitted to push on, we could have surprised Garnett in his camp that morning. His pickets or his scouts had been so unusually and unaccountably absent or neglectful as to leave the whole route unguarded, and even unwatched, as stated.

We established ourselves as directed, with the headquarters at Eliot's house, and with most of the command in advance of us some half-mile, with pickets beyond to nearly twice that distance; and a small intrenchment was attempted on a rocky hill within our lines, one afternoon, while, during a violent thunder-storm, we expected an attack from Garnett's forces under cover of the heavy rain and darkness of the storm. The advance of the enemy was actually reported; and the precaution of the artillery fire (the

first that many of our men had ever witnessed), into the advancing storm-cloud, supposed to cover the rebel approach, made a spectacle very exciting as well as grand; while with each order for the discharge came forth the approving cheer from the men at their intrenching work, — the "Bully for you!" of the Western men, — the first time I had ever heard this cry.

And for nearly a week, with occasional alarms of an attack in force, we watched this road to the north, and those to the right and left, along the north face of the mountain, as ordered by McClellan; it being understood (as was stated by him) that *he* was to take care of the road *south*, over the mountain; by which road Garnett eventually escaped. We had daily skirmishing — now and then a man killed, and some two to five wounded each day, on either side — for the five or six days we lay there; from time to time routing out Garnett's camp with our artillery, which I had placed on the different near hills as they could reach him. This continued until about seven, A.M., on the morning of the 12th of July; when a sergeant of the command (a preacher at home), who had been on picket, or (scouting on his own account), came rushing into Morris's headquarters at Eliot's House, crying out, "They are gone, they are all gone! We can see no one in their camp." I mounted at once, and went forward to Garnett's camp, reconnoitring carefully as we came near, and entered the works, which I found were in a *continuous line* from the woods at the north to the mountain on the west. I there saw manifest signs of their leaving in great haste. Many articles of value, even, had been abandoned, and much that was useful. I sent back at once to request that Gen. Morris would send forward two regiments, and a wagon-load or two of biscuit, for the pursuit. And *while waiting for these* in Garnett's camp, about nine, A.M., I received from Gen. Morris an order sent to him by Gen. McClellan, informing him of the rout of Pegram, and *forbidding him to attack Garnett.*

As soon as the first regiment arrived, we started to go over the Laurel Mountain, and reach the south side, about three or four miles distant, between one and two, P.M. Here Gen. Morris joined us; and, after remaining an hour or so, he returned to camp to bring up the rest of his men. But he directed me not to move from that position until he rejoined us, as he expected to some time that afternoon. We very soon ascertained that Garnett, instead of continuing south to Beverly (ten or twelve miles distant), had turned to his left, to the north-east, on a road at the foot of the Laurel Mountain, towards the village of New Interest. While delayed here, and after writing and sending off a report to McClellan, I exacted a *positive promise* from Col. Milroy of the Ninth Indiana Regiment (whose ill-judged zeal I greatly feared), that he would remain there, as we were ordered by Morris; and I then made a reconnoissance to the front, towards Leedsville, two to three miles south. Yet upon my return, about dusk, I found Milroy, in his earnestness, had broken his word with me, and started off with his regiment (all the command following) to the north-east, on the road at the mountain's foot, on the trail of Garnett. I overtook him on the route, about a mile and a half, and finally prevented his farther advance, but not till I had lain down in the road, for his men to march over me if he persisted.

The troops then closed up somewhat, and went into bivouac; there being but one small farmhouse near, which gave cover to many of the officers during a violent storm that commenced at dark, and lasted most of the night. About nine or ten, P.M., Gen. Morris joined us, and was quite indignant at Milroy's disobedience, saying he should not lead the march in the pursuit on the next day to punish him for this disobedience of his order; by which he had found every thing — artillery, wagons, and all — were in the greatest confusion on this narrow mountain-path at midnight.

About ten, P.M., orders came from McClellan, then at Beverly (in response to my report), for us to pursue with the earliest light, and stating that Gen. Hill had orders sent him to intercept Garnett where he was expected to pass at the "Red House," near Oakland, some twenty-five or thirty miles to the north-east of us.

At daylight of the 13th, I started in command of the advance column, with Col. Steedman (Fourteenth Ohio) leading, then two guns of Col. Barnett's Cleveland (Ohio) Artillery, then Col. Dumont (Seventh Indiana), a battalion of the Sixteenth Ohio (Lieut.-Col. Irvine), and last Col. Milroy (Ninth Indiana), placed in rear on account of disobedience and breach of promise of the day before; there being some eighteen hundred men in all. On reaching New Interest, at six to seven, A.M., we began to find the camp equipage scattered along the road; first tent-poles, then tents, and then camp-furniture. And soon we made sure that Garnett had turned off over a winding, hilly road, to his right, which passed over several mountain spurs to branches of the Cheat River, and led to the village of St. Georges, some fifteen to twenty miles to the north-east on its right bank; and, later, we found, as we entered this mountain road, that the more valuable camp-furniture was then being left behind, and among the first (probably as an example), the fine camp-stools, &c. (as marked) of Gen. Garnett himself. We then came upon barricades of trees felled across the roads upon the mountain slopes, and at all defiles and steep "hill-sides:" some eighteen or twenty such obstructions, from eighty to three hundred yards in extent on the road, were encountered in the march of some eight to ten miles over two spurs of the mountains. The rebels, fortunately for us, left their axes as they fled from our advance skirmishers, sometimes by twos and threes, struck into the trees woodman like, sometimes by the boxful even; and thus we were soon enabled, with our Western woodsmen, to clear these roads even for our artillery: so that, when we eventually reached the Cheat River, near noon, our guns joined our advance regiment (Steedman's) within twenty to thirty minutes after.

On this route, about ten to eleven, A.M., after passing the second mountain-spur, we came upon the last camp of Garnett, deserted in such haste, that the provisions were actually cooking upon the fires, and were soon devoured by our half-famished men; for many of them, as I that morning learned, had had nothing to eat since they left their own camp early the day before, from the oversight of their officers, or in their haste to join in the pursuit; I myself securing a cracker and a bit of broiled pork, — almost my first food for twenty-four hours.

About ten to eleven, A.M., we came upon some wagons loaded with clothing, drab overcoats, &c.; with which

I at once equipped our advance skirmishers, to deceive the enemy, as well as to protect ourselves from the violent storm which had been raging for several hours. The drab overcoats (made of their negro cloth) I found were quite useful in masking our approach from the stragglers of the rebels in front, or from their deserters, who, in several instances, were, at the first, much alarmed at the idea that they had fallen into the hands of their own rear-guard while attempting to escape. And at length, after a march of four to five hours during this most violent rain, in which it poured through my felt hat, down my neck, through my clothes, and down inside my boots (the men being much worse off, as I fear, as they were frequently over their ankles in mud), we left the mountain-passes, and came upon the signs of cultivation, and reached the river — the Black Fork of the Cheat River — about five miles above or south-west of its junction. I crossed with two or three officers, directing all others to remain on our own side. We immediately discovered the rebel wagon-train resting in a field in the river bottom, about five hundred yards in advance, and apparently entirely unsuspicious of our approach. I at once directed Col. Steedman, as soon as he could learn that our guns were near his regiment, and Dumont well up behind them, that he should cross carefully; and passing along by the road on the right bank, as it curved to our left, and was screened by the thick trees and bushes on the right of this road, he was to endeavor to pass to the right and rear of their wagons, without, as appeared possible, his being discovered.

These guns of Barnett were reported to be well up, and Dumont just behind them, ready to close in some fifteen or twenty minutes after; and the movement of Steedman commenced with every prospect of his getting to their rear unseen, and of capturing the whole train, as he moved with much boldness and discretion. But, at this juncture, a scoundrel straggler, who had crossed without permission, fired off his musket in the air, towards the wagon-train, as I could only suppose on purpose to drive them forward, and avoid a fight. I endeavored to gallop over him with my horse; but he escaped down the steep bank into the river. But the train, for this time at least, was saved; for we saw the wagons move on immediately after, and then two lines of infantry draw out to protect them; and they started on the run for the next ford.

I delayed Steedman there until most of our troops had closed up; and then we moved on as rapidly as possible, crossing this second ford after covering with our fire the adjacent hills to prevent a suspected ambuscade. And about two miles farther on, from a high hill, we came in sight of their regiments, on a regular run, and so near, that I ordered up the guns, directing the *vis a tergo* of a few discharges to expedite their movement, already characterized by one of our Western captains as a "long dog-trot."

This force was still followed as rapidly as possible; although two messages had already reached me from Gen. Morris, each with a contingency, fortunately, "to stop the pursuit." I had the first message before I came to the first ford: it was brought by young Pritchard (son of lieutenant-colonel of Sixth Indiana), who had been sent back with the first flag, captured, as it was, under my horse's

feet. This order required, that, if I "was not sure of reaching the enemy within two or three hours," I "must halt, and rest my men." The second message, by Sergeant-Major Fletcher of the Sixth Indiana, directed me to stop, and rest my men, unless I "was immediately upon the enemy." A third, by Gen. Morris's aide (Lieut. Hines), reached me as I was arranging for action at Corrick's Ford, and was, to "stop at once, unless" I "was ready to strike;" to which my reply simply was, "Wait five minutes!" Gen. Morris afterwards told me, another (a fourth) message had been sent, — a positive order to stop at once (and, as I understood, by Whitelaw Reid, a Cincinnati reporter); but, as the general said, "This was not delivered, as you were found to be fighting." These orders were sent because Gen. Morris had seen only the stragglers who "fell by the wayside;" while I had the "whalebone" with me.

Our march thus continued for about three miles from the second ford, till we came to another field of river-bottom land, and another ford. Here we saw that the rebel troops had crossed, and that a part of their train was in the river, apparently balked; and we soon found that they were making dispositions to defend this train, from the steep, elevated ground (about sixty to eighty feet above the river) on the opposite side; the river being some hundred and twenty yards wide and three feet deep at this ford.

The advance regiments (Steedman's and next Dumont's), with Barnett's Artillery, were soon arranged along the river-bank, behind a rail fence, partially covered by a slight screen of trees; and our fire first opened at them across the river upon their more advantageous position; and I could not force our gallant fellows, so unused to the danger, to take the slight cover of the bank of an old channel-way, a few rods in their rear, — a cover such as before the war closed, however, with just as much of bravery, our men, on other fields, had learned to appreciate, and to seize on all occasions. We received a strong musketry-fire in return; and soon their cannon opened on us, with the usual effect, or, rather, non-effect, from a much more elevated position, fortunately for us, for the most part; and we replied more effectively with our riflemen and artillery. As, however, in the course of some ten to fifteen minutes I discovered a break in the hill on their left, which indicated an easier ascent than by the steep bank in our front, I sent orders to Dumont to cross at our right, and move up this valley-gorge to attack them. This was soon proved to be impossible (as I found afterwards, this slope was strewn with dead cedars), and the steepness was too great directly in front. I saw the men flat on the ground, endeavoring to crawl up the bank; and Col. Milroy, who followed Dumont closely, rode up to me, and reported the hill to be entirely impracticable. I sent word by him to Dumont to go down the river with his regiment, and to hug the cover of the bank, on the side of the enemy; and that he would certainly find the road below them, opposite our left. The firing still continued for some fifteen to twenty minutes longer, between our main body and the rebels on the hill; our men picking off their gunners whenever seen through the branches of the trees. And at length I saw the men of Dumont moving down as directed, until they passed the rebel front at the foot of the bank, and turned in-

land, to the right of the enemy, bringing themselves at once in rear of their position; when the rebels hastily retreated past the next ford, some five hundred yards distant, leaving their cannon, and their dead and wounded, behind them. And they were closely followed by Dumont's regiment skirmishing in their rear.

I afterwards learned that Col. Dumont complained much of this order (which, in fact, "turned the tide of battle," and closed it at that point) by saying that he had *nearly* executed the first order for an attack on rebel left, when he was ordered down "between the two fires." As to which I can say, that, besides my *witnessing* their ineffectual efforts to make that assault, I had the positive report of Col. Milroy, who came from them, that the hill was impassable; while it is further a fact, *that not a single man of Dumont's regiment was either killed or wounded during the passage* under the bank along the rebel front.

At about the time of this retreat of the enemy from his position on the hill, the leading regiment (the Sixth Indiana) of Gen. Morris's main column, that had hurried up, hearing the firing, joined us, though too late to share in the action.

I crossed over immediately after Dumont's success, finding twenty-two heavily-loaded wagons stalled in the river, and a like number in the roadway made through an impracticable laurel-thicket on the other side, — all with their horses and harnesses attached. And ascending by the rear, to the plateau they had just occupied, we found their cannon and caisson, with the dead gunners (seven or eight men) lying around the piece, mostly shot in the head, some directly above the mouth; the only sight our men had, being through the bush embrasures.

The position Garnett had selected here was one of the best natural defensive sites I ever saw. It was a cleared field of some two hundred yards square, with a steep bank sixty to eighty feet down to the river. The bank was covered with thick undergrowth, and fringed at the top with trees whose branches had been cut away to give firing views, — embrasures, in fact, for their guns. On their left, a steep ravine of a V cross section, filled with dead cedars, as stated, protected them, as we had found, completely from assault; and on their right flank, as this plateau dropped to near the river-level, they were covered by the broad laurel-thicket, impracticable to man or beast, even to the smaller animals, except by roadways cut through by the axe.

While examining the dead at this position, Major Gordon (just recently sergeant-major of the Ninth Indiana) came up to me, asking if I knew Garnett, saying an officer had just been killed at the next near ford, who had "stars on his shoulders." I at once accompanied him, crossing the ford; and, about twenty yards beyond, I found the rebel general, R. S. Garnett, lying dead, and near him the body of a young lad, in the uniform of the Georgia troops (gray with black facings, like that of our Indiana regiments). No other signs of strife were near; and I learned that they had been killed from a clump of bushes on our side the river-bank, by the fire, at about the same time, of three of our advanced scouts. Recognizing Garnett at once, who, six years before, received the majority I had declined in the Ninth U. S. Infantry, I had Major Gordon remove and take care

of his sword, watch, and purse (of Confederate money), reserving for our use, as much needed, a fine map of Virginia, and his field-glass.

We had his body taken to the house of Mr. Corrick, on the adjacent hill; and I may here state, that the next day we selected Garnett's own ambulance for his remains, which were placed in a box with salt. And Major Gordon, by Gen. Morris's order, was sent with the body, sword, &c., to Grafton; from which place they were forwarded, as early as practicable, to his friends at Richmond, Va.; a courtesy but poorly repaid by the rebels at Bull Run the next week.

We afterwards learned from Mr. Corrick, that as the rear of the rebel column was in full retreat past his house, after the action with us at their wagon-train, Gen. Garnett came there, and called upon his men for thirty sharpshooters to go back with him "to pick off the officers" of our troops; that he could obtain only about fifteen, who returned with him to the field, where he was killed, when all who could, escaped. I have myself but little doubt that he returned in the expectation or hope of losing his life in mortification at this disastrous rout.

After thus identifying the body, and giving the directions for the proper care of it, I returned to our troops, now, for the most part, across the ford, near the stalled rebel wagon-train, and directed one of the leading colonels, who had done finely in this pursuit, to select his best disciplined and most reliable company to take the charge of that train and the property captured; to await the orders of Gen. Morris, and then to let his men have rest and food, if obtainable. Upon which, I went forward for some two miles, following Dumont's regiment (which had been previously advanced as skirmishers), to ascertain if there was any hope of reaching any other considerable body of the enemy. This seemed entirely out of the question, as the main force of some three thousand to four thousand, at least, appeared to have been continuously in full retreat; while the rear-guard of two or three regiments had fought us to save their wagon-trains if possible.

On giving up the further pursuit, indispensably, from the weariness and hunger of our men, Dumont's regiment was directed to go into bivouac from one to two miles in advance of Corrick's; and, returning late in the afternoon, I found Gen. Morris at Corrick's house, with all the command near. But, going to the captured wagon-train, I discovered that a systematic pillage of the whole train had been going on under the direction of the colonel in whose charge it had been left.

The rebel troops appear to have been amply supplied with every necessary — clothing, medical stores, tents, &c. — except provisions; and the officers, generally, with splendid campaign outfits, such as I have never seen at any time with our troops, either before or since. And I found all the boxes of clothing had been broken up, and their contents distributed by that colonel to his regiment, or to his favorites of the other troops; the more valuable stores, and the trunks of the rebel officers, being especially secured by himself and those around him, as appeared. One young man attached to our staff, now commissioned in the army, told me he saw this colonel with a "double handful of gold watches." I was greatly

mortified at this betrayal of the trust given to this officer; but on reporting it to Gen. Morris, as the rifling of the train appeared to have been pretty successfully and thoroughly completed, there seemed to be then no remedy, especially in this moment of success, with these new and undisciplined troops just going out of service, as they all knew.

The killed and wounded on our side were limited to five or six only, as they mostly fired upon us down hill. Of the rebels we found about fifteen bodies, and some twenty to thirty wounded. There were also taken three flags, a fine rifled cannon, a military chest with bank money ready for signing, and — besides a large amount of valuable private property — the train to the number of forty-four heavily-loaded wagons, with their horses and harnesses even (some hundred and fifty to two hundred in all); and, in the pursuit next day and the day after, about fifteen more loaded wagons were captured, or about sixty in all. They were loaded with clothing, blankets, tents, &c., and at an estimated value, as far as we could judge, of at least some two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The quartermaster at the Grafton depot afterwards told me, that there had reached that station, within the next two or three weeks (and by difficult or mountain roads), an amount of property worth at least a hundred thousand dollars. And this was after weeks of plundering by the occupants of the adjacent farms, and after nearly all the horses and large amounts of other property, as I was told, had been run across the Ohio River, by these retiring troops, whose three months of service expired, for the most part, within one or two weeks after this action, which ended the first campaign in West Virginia.

The report of the action was written and sent to Gen. McClellan from Corrick's House, on the morning of the 14th, and received by him at Huttonsville, Va., about thirty-five miles south-east, at "eleven, P.M;" when he at once telegraphed this success to Washington in glowing colors.

Upon the 14th of July, having gathered up the most of the property left by the enemy, Gen. Morris's column started on its march to the town of St. Georges, on the Cheat River, about eight to ten miles north-east of Corrick's Ford; and, for the first four or five miles, we followed the route of the rebels, who from thence had passed more to the eastward, — to the south of Oakland, where Gen. Hill (of Toledo, O.) had been ordered by McClellan, but failed to intercept them. These routed forces were in such a state of suffering for provisions, as I was informed a short time after by some of the principal persons in that vicinity, that they actually caught the fowls from the barn-yards as they passed along; and, tearing the feathers off, they devoured them raw.

Our route to St. Georges lay through three or four fords of the Cheat River; and, on reaching the second and third fords, we found several of their baggage-wagons broken down and deserted, and many rooms and outhouses at the farms near, filled with the carpet-bags these new troops had used in place of knapsacks, and with bales of new blankets, &c.; and again, a mile or two farther to the right of the route we pursued, I found and took possession of eleven wagons, loaded with clothing, &c., which were left, after the horses had been taken away, the evening previous.

Gathering up the most of this property, and impressing the farmers near with their teams (in compensation for their own plunder still retained), we at length, that evening (of the 14th), reached St. Georges. Our men, also, had suffered greatly for the want of food; their main reliance that day, as well as on the afternoon previous, having been only the beef cattle of the vicinity, which, though found in abundance, for the most part had to be eaten, as just killed and roasted, without bread, vegetables, or salt; though we had the adjacent country scoured by mounted men, for several miles, for this last indispensable condiment, which was either wanting, or concealed from us. The effects of this diet upon the men, so accustomed to salt provisions, was most injurious and weakening, accompanied with purgings and vomitings: so that next day, when we moved back to our old camp (some twenty-five to thirty miles), whole companies of men, as it was told me, — the whole battalion of the Sixteenth Ohio especially, — marched the entire distance without food, in their fear of using this unsalted beef.

After resting the men for the night at St. Georges, on the 15th of July, Gen. Morris directed their return to Eliot's, near Beelington, where all arrived either that evening or the next day. I may mention, that, some four or five miles out from St. Georges, a few bush-whackers, screened in a thicket on a steep hill near the road, attempted the assassination of Gen. Morris by pouring their fire into his ambulance, which, however, was occupied by only rebel officers, prisoners. And, when once back in camp, the preparations were then made for the return and muster-out of these troops, nearly all of whose three-months' terms expired within the next eight or ten days.

It may be mentioned here, in closing this narrative of the campaign, that the main column, of some nine thousand men, had lain for some ten days, under Gen. McClellan, between Buckhannon and Rich Mountain, in front of Pegram; and from them (on the 11th of July) about three thousand men were sent, under Rosecrans (with the gallant Lander as confidential aide of McClellan), to get some seven miles in rear of Pegram, where they captured a two-gun battery under Capt. De Lagnel, "with two hundred and twenty-eight men" (as De Lagnel gave the account to Col. Morrow of McClellan staff). Upon which success Pegram retreated to his right; and, after two days, he surrendered, with some six hundred men, to Gen. McClellan. And at Philippi, Morris's column of three thousand to four thousand men, on the 2d of June, routed Porterfield and some fifteen hundred men, capturing four to six flags, a large quantity of small-arms &c.; and at Corrick's Ford, on the 13th of July, these same troops routed the main force of the enemy in Virginia, estimated at five thousand, or upwards (some five regiments, besides artillery and cavalry), killed their commanding general, and captured three flags, a fine rifled cannon, and all his train and munitions of war. So that Gen. McClellan, on receiving the news of this action at eleven, P.M., the next evening (July 14), was able to telegraph, "We have killed Garnett; the enemy are annihilated; and I firmly believe secession is killed in West Virginia."

Upon the evening of the 16th, Major Marcy, chief of staff of Gen. McClellan, came to Eliot's (*en route* to Washington) with McClellan's reports, and

the flags from Philippi, and requiring also those just captured, which, being still with the regiments in camp, he would not wait for, but ordered to be "sent express to Washington."

Major Marcy had with him at this time four flags that had been captured at Phillippi, which, with considerable difficulty and management, I had recovered from the colonels of the regiments who had them, and sent to Gen. McClellan some time previously. One of them, I recollect, was an elegant green silk cavalry flag, or guidon, with gold bullion tassels and fringe, that had within the week been presented to the Highland Guards by the ladies of Highland County; when the captain, as we were told, had promised "to defend that flag with the last drop of his blood," &c. I presume, however, he forgot his promise, as no one was killed in this rout. As this banner had on it in gold letters the motto, "GOD DEFEND THE RIGHT," I had the pleasure, soon after, of sending word to the ladies of Highland County "that God had heard and answered their prayer."

Of the three flags taken at Corrick's Ford, one was a large flag of Col. Taliaferro's Twenty-third Virginia Regiment; another was a silk flag of Col. Ramsey's Georgia Regiment; and the third, taken just after the action, was an elegant white silk color, with silver tassels and fringe, and over the arms of Georgia the motto, "COTTON IS KING," surmounting the temple. This beautiful and unique banner has proved too much for the honesty of some of the people about the White House or the War Department; for in the winter of 1863 and '64, when I found most of these other flags in the war-office, this white banner had disappeared, as had also the green silk cavalry guidon taken at Philippi.

Major Marcy proceeded to Washington, reaching there a day or two before the defeat of Bull Run, and at a most fortunate moment, as it proved, for himself and his chief; for though it is certain, I believe, that neither McClellan nor any of his staff (not on detached service) had been within the range of a hostile cannon, if they had even heard its sound, in all these actions and skirmishes, yet, within that week, McClellan's chief of staff, Major Marcy, was made inspector-general, and McClellan himself the major-general and *acting chief of our whole army.*

This short record of facts might close here, were it not somewhat instructive to notice the course of this general in relation to his active assistants in this brief and brilliant campaign, in so strong contrast to the constant action of his last successor in the war, as the results have shown; and in such stronger contrast even, in the final positions and success of these two generals.

At the time of Major Marcy's visit at Eliot's, he showed the roll of McClellan's report, stating the names of the "but three persons specially mentioned" in that report, the two confidential officers from his staff, and *one* of the detached commanders. That report, in 1864, *was not to be found at the War Department*, although its forwarding letter of July 15 was there: so that what that commendation of these officers was cannot now be ascertained, although, in one case at least, at that time, it was read by the officer referred to.

What his final action may have been towards his commander at Rich Mountain is not known; but for

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MAJ. GEN. HENRY WASHINGTON BENHAM
CADET U. S. M. A., 1833-1837
BORN 1813—DIED 1884

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his other commander, one of the best and noblest of men, and upon whom the responsibility had rested of the course which had given McClellan his main victory, he *suppressed* the commission of major-general, when signed by Lincoln, by aspersions on that officer, as I was told by a prominent official of Congress, a near relative of that officer; while to his own staff-officer with this commander, and thus temporarily under this general's orders, McClellan had written as follows, *at the very hour* he dated his first despatch to Washington (eleven, P.M.): "Allow me to express my sincere thanks, and my profound admiration of your heroic courage and great professional skill, evinced in the late rout of Garnett's forces. Let me assure you that nothing would give me more satisfaction than to give you the full credit you deserve," &c. To this officer, on being notified that the president would make him a brigadier-general, if he (McClellan) approved, he sent back (and this within the same week) a telegram of the most bitter and insulting character, and delayed for months his appointment as a general, besides injuring him in many ways for years after. And this simply because that officer had received from Gen. Morris the order to take the captured flags to Washington, as McClellan's own chief of staff had directed, and as was a proper order to the staff-officer commanding the advanced fighting force.

And as to the fourth officer (now dead), the possessor of his papers told me of two similarly *contrasting* telegrams among them from McClellan,— one, as an answer to some suggestions of this most active and gallant officer, to the effect that he was *to mind his own duties*, and "attend to his own regiments" (this officer being then a general); the other, three weeks later, said, "Come to me, and do for me as you did at Rich Mountain."

Well indeed might that officer have said to McClellan, as he told me he did in the first week of his arrival in Washington, "General, if you are to hold the high position you now have, it will not do for you to kick down the ladders by which you rose," — words prophetic, though the speaker did not live to see that general's fall, or the rise of another to his position, who has clung to every good man about him, who had aided him as he rose (as every such man has clung to him), until he now holds the highest position in the gift of a great free people that the world has ever known.

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